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The Abbot Courant

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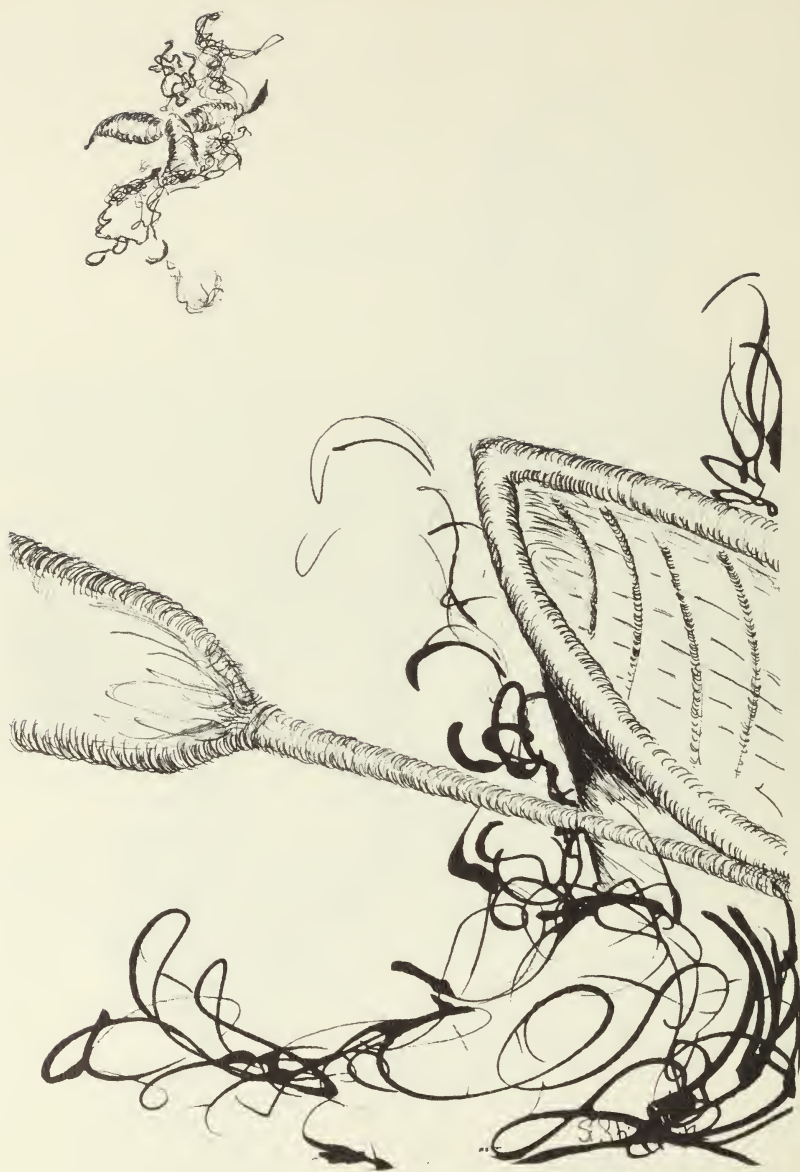
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Au Courant

Jay L. Byrrd, ex-convict, found it difficult to adapt himself to his new surroundings when he finally found himself once more on the sunny side of the bars. It was not exactly that he missed the shadowy rocks or the uncompromising metal that had been the ingredients of his home for the past four years; it was just that the sunlight was almost too bright, and the air almost too laden with ozone. As he wandered around he discovered that he was following a line almost as ungraphable as the line followed by a honeybee. The bee had a specific purpose for his meandering: to find nectar. Byrrd also had a specific purpose, however: to find a Purpose. As he and all his fellow ex-convicts follow the erring bee through the dandelion fields in search for the one incomparable peony, we wish each other and all others a Purposeful search.

C.A.M.



Kcidybom (cont.)

In the January issue of the *Courant* we left the insidious Baha still attempting to block the valiant Dog-pip's efforts to escape the murderous Kcidybom who chases the Dog-quep for the sole purpose of destroying her. Ishmael is now speaking of the wily Baha:

I must pronounced him, in my heart, a fool, as do we all, for as Alladef says, he has no logic to him, and for me that is enough. He is, as Dog-pip decrees, best ignored. Suddenly, however, we hear a sound in the crows nest, and I perceive that Alladef has begun to jump to and fro in great excitement. He finally exclaims quite loudly, "There she blows!" and the crew with great eagerness makes ready the deck for battle. It is difficult to describe the great tension experienced by all, but as we have been instructed upon countless occasions, the scene progresses with symmetry. With great serenity, my companion deals me a heavy blow and now I find myself sprawled full length on the deck. As we have been taught we hurl harpoons at the deck with magnificent precision. It has been said by scholars for ages that perfection has been achieved by necessity, and I can think of no better example to advance this statement. Although Dog-pip has frequently drilled us in this exercise, should Kcidybom ever be sighted, never has it been performed with such order and precision. Struck by many blows and a harpoon, Alladef at length lowers longboats, and now the crew can be seen trembling and falling into them amidst great shouts.

Baha alone does not move. Throughout the procedure he has been shouting monomaniacally, refusing to proffer even a finger in our effort to lower the boats. His madness seems greater than previously, for he shouts and struts like a chicken caught in a room with a fox.

"There is no Kcidybom! Stop! Stop, you madmen! Does anyone actually see him? Don't hurl harpoons at the deck, you'll sink this vessel! Order, everyone, order! Listen, you animals, can't you hear Dog-pip? Can you hear him? He's laughing at you! Listen!"

I include this passage to illustrate more clearly the mania of Baha. It seems as though all the insanity of this world has been concentrated into this one man. It is becoming difficult even to describe him as a man, for a man, says Alladef, possesses reason. Never was the converse so true.

But as I listen more carefully, yes, I perceive a sound. Dog-pip, high in his lofty throne, is laughing, laughing so that he shakes the mast, laughing so that the clouds seem to stop and take notice, laughing so that an albatross, soaring overhead, listens and caws a response. The situation is, indeed, ludicrous. What wisdom would not laugh at such folly, when confronted with such stupidity and ignorance?

"Here's a world, this ship and 'they are all on fire to destroy it.' What's the consequence? If it sinks, who cares? Doesn't everything? Oh, here's a pretty mess. There she blows! Hey, hey, hey, hey! Do you see a whale? Not I! Do you? It seems to have slipped past me, but doesn't everything There she blows! Avast ye lubbers! Ha ha ha ha ha ha——"

The wind blows his words down to the deck, but they are lost to all but Alladef in the longboat, and Baha, who has refused to budge from his position. Having been assured of their meaning, however, we begin, amidst great shouts from the crew, to row to a distant spot in the shoreless sea, where Kcidybom is said to lurk.

SINIF

The Editors

Light Search

Midnight,
 The hour when,
 all mad men
are in bed. And the
 good are out
 looking for
them.

CHER LEWIS

From below
In the Pit of Hell
I see faces,
Though veiled by yellow mist,
Visible in the ethereal sky.
Their eyes claim despair.
Some show pity.
No hope for me.
Yet, surely I merit not this,
Dungeon of endless suffering,
Barred with torment and grief,
Holding me eternal prisoner.
Even as I watch
The fiery walls of flame
Flare and rise
Till naught but Hell remains.

NANCY BUTTERFIELD



The Disillusionment of an Afternoon

I had thought
That all
Was within my reach,
In my room,
To be touched,
Or spoken to,
Or cared about.

But the grey-pink fog
Of my youth's naiveté
Covered all but the highest dunes;

To know is to have learned,
But to have seen through a glass darkly
Is to have dreamed
Of things
Not real,
Or here.
Or yours.

MARGARET WILDE

Shades

Her eyes were glazed; not a sentimental glaze or a veil of happiness. They were not rimmed with depression. She was drunk; deeply drunk. So drunk that her voice sounded from her toes, and her words were slow and painfully said, and her eyes were shining vacuums of numbed sensitivity and she had been like that for a long time.

The room was heavy and brown and the lights were dim, dimmed pieces of red and blue and purple, casting the solemn splendor of a cathedral and its source was a Tiffany shade. The collected Chinese music boxes, gilded, painted, ornate, tinkling strangely, alluring one into a world of incense, smoking, smelling and traditional chants, an Eastern ritual of foreignness and fascination.

Her senses were stripped to a naked responsiveness and the voices of her guests sang in her ears, mellowed and mingling with the crack of a billowed flame of the dancing fire and the swinging lights and the clinking ice and the drugging potion that made her sleepier and sleepier. Her mask was gone and as she slipped into serenity, she realized once again that the brown, swirling serum of senselessness had granted her a high-priced peace.

DYAN DRISCOLL



Oh, Aunts How We Wish We Could Be Like You Or The Witches at Wychwood Farms

It is a truth perhaps not universally known, but self-evident to us: the lost generation, that we are misunderstood, bemused, and misused by our elders. Our elders should quickly be defined as those who are far superior in their discernment of this vast, complicated world. They are our guiding lights. After all, where would the younger generation be without the grand counsel of our elders?

"Marguerite, those rolls are not cooked enough! Look how the dough is still raw!"

"Well, Rebecca, I'm sure that you could do better, so perhaps you would like to bake the yeast products from now on."

"On the contrary, my dear sister-in-law, I do not feel that my standing in the family would permit me to perform such a menial task. I think that you are most suited for it. For myself I will stay with the financial end of the business, something I am sure that you could not handle."

Marguerite was a pawn in a game in which she could never win. When she was but nineteen, she married Mr. Submise. She could not have known the fate which awaited her. Her natural sweet, gay, and quietly intellectual character was a "*pièce de résistance*" for Mr. Submise's three stepsisters: Priscilla, Dot, and Rebecca Nonquie.

Luckily for poor, downtrodden Marguerite, her daughter, Patty, came bursting into the kitchen just having finished milking thirty cows. Patty was a teenager with a mind of her own which showed none of the servility that her mother's did. When she burst into the kitchen, she could at once grasp the situation and expressed her indignation in an ingenious manner.

"Why Aunt B, have you been cooking yeast products? They certainly look delicious! M-m-m. They taste good too. How did you learn to make such great rolls? I was sure that was mother's department."

"Well, I must admit that I can't take all the credit for them. Your mother did help me."

"My goodness, but I was sure that I saw Mama making them before I went out to milk. I mean, I just want to give credit where credit is due."

"You think you are so smart young lady but you are not. You're just a whippersnapper who needs to learn some respect for her elders. You purposely made me say I had made the rolls so that I would look like a complete fool. Just for that your clothes allotment is postponed for another month. You may be in rags until you're twenty-one at the rate you're going. Can't you ever learn respect?"

"But, Aunt Becky, can't you see that it's hard to give equal respect to you three when my mother is the one who deserves all the respect?"

Marguerite has gone to her room to prepare herself for dinner. Dinner at the Submise's was always an ordeal. Under the bright lights all souls seemed to be bared to undying ridicule and embarrassment.

But Rebecca had not had the last word. Since she was the oldest of the happily little clan, she was positive it was her prerogative. "Patty, we decided long ago that your mother was not fit to raise children. How could she be? After all she was only in her twenties, and we, being much older and wiser, took over her job of upbringing. Besides how could someone from a different part of the country possibly know anything about raising children as well as us?"

"My dear aunt, I suppose that your not being married would not hold you back from something as unimportant as raising someone else's children?"

"Patricia, how could you be so naive? We would have all three gotten married but who would have stayed home to look after your father? And when he came home with that young wench, we just knew we couldn't leave him alone to take care of this big farm and all the finances. But now everything is so organized: I do the books, Dot does the cooking and washing; that's all the poor girl can handle now. I really do think she's getting past her prime. Then there is Priscilla, our social director, to invite all our friends for sherry on Sunday. If I do say so myself I think we've done quite well. John has graduated from our local state college; He has a brand new car. Isn't it nice that it has so few miles on it. We really would give him the spending money you know, but he is such a homebody. I just can't figure him out.

"And you, my sweet, I think you are our masterpiece. I'm so glad that you haven't grown much since six grade, because all those wonderful bright red sweaters and pretty little plaid skirts look so darling on you now, even in the eleventh grade. The money saved is just marvelous. I can't understand why you young people want those faddy new clothes. You know the skirt lengths will be down below the knees any year now. You realize how 'a stitch in time saves nine'. Another thing I can't fathom is why those dermatologists insist your acne problems are all from nervous tension, stemming from family relations. Pshaw! That's a lot of nonsense. I'm certainly not going to let any more money out for those expensive appointments. I'm sure it will all clear up after you get through this disturbing adolescent period you're experiencing. I fail to see why you young people think you know so much. But anyway, you really must try to explain your generation to me someday."

Patty answered as politely as she possibly could to this oft repeated lecture. Her composure was a wonder to behold. "Oh, Auntie there is plenty of time before dinner, almost fifteen minutes. I know with your quick mind working at full speed ahead you could grasp the basics with your usual facility. Sit down right here; I know...."

"Oh dear Patty, I haven't the time now to listen. I **must** go to balance some of the checkbooks.

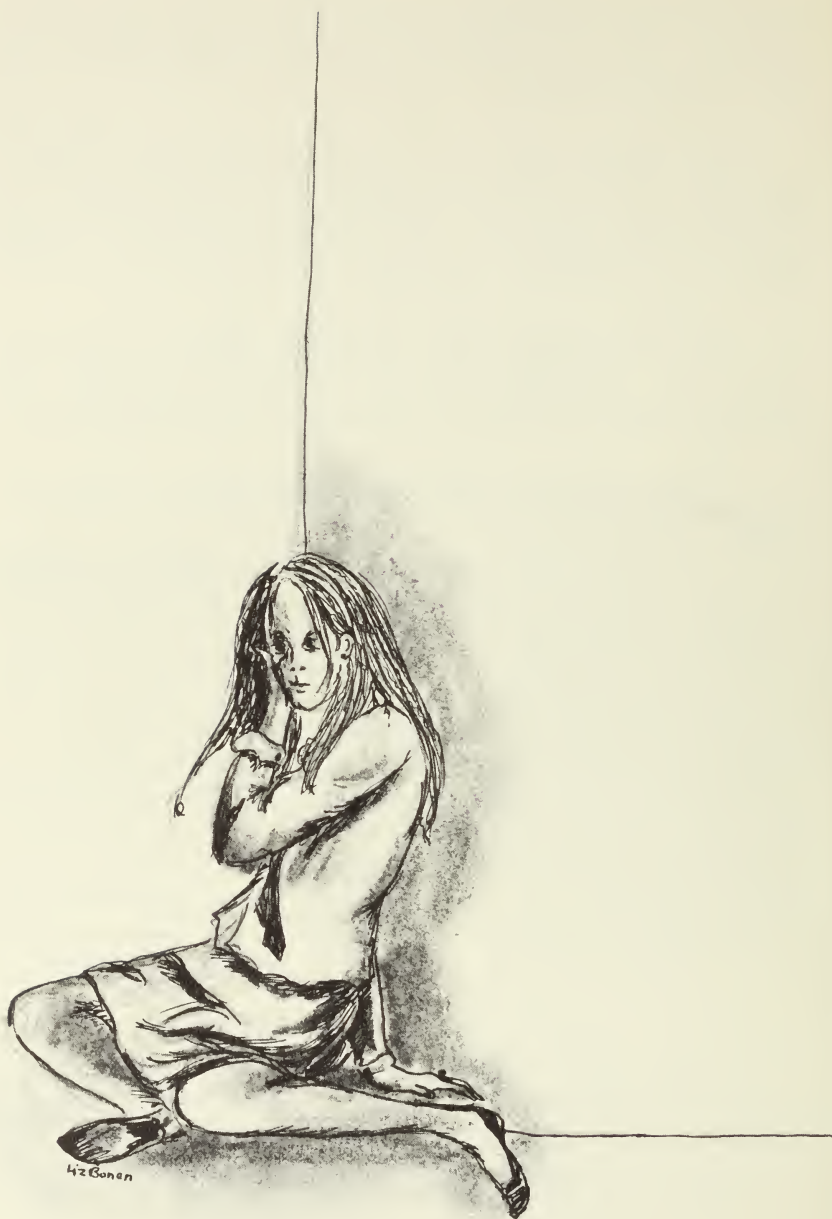
“By the way, your father sent word over from the workroom that he couldn’t get to dinner, **again!** I wish he would come occasionally. You children will forget you even have a father. But of course that’s ridiculous, HA-Ha.

“Also, remind John to sit at the head of the table. I hope he remembers to come and get his money for the date he said he was going on tonight. I hope he doesn’t back down as he has the last few times. He gets so intimidated when I ask him a few simple questions about his date. Oh, hum, dear John.

“Well, Pat, my girl,” says dear Rebecca, patting the young miss on the head, “you must understand why I can’t learn about your generation today. I just have too many more important things to do.”

“Uh-huh, *Manana*,” sighs Patty, with the glint of rebellion fading from her eyes.

NANCY ROBERTS




Reached

In my little private corner,
 No one would dare disturb me
'Cause, in my little private corner
 Nobody can find me.
Not even Mommy.
And I sit here for days, and look out of my window.
No, silly,
Not in the corner,
 but in my head.
I see Daddy, like he was yesterday.
 Mommy's face.
 I knocked over the dish.
 And things no one thinks I can remember.
Noises
 and squiggly-squams of light cross my eyeballs,
Like when I press them with my fingers.
 Someone finds my corner
 and I am disturbed.

CHER LEWIS

Reflections




a useless weed.
growing
enveloping
smothering
what to do
innocent victims
who will stop it?

I

a cancerous sore.
growing
enveloping
smothering
what to do
innocent victims
who will stop it?

I



useless, cancerous people.
growing
enveloping
smothering
what to do
innocent victims
who will stop them

I?

DEBBIE WEBSTER

The Summer's End

As I locked the door I noticed that crispness in the air which marks the beginning of autumn. I leaped down the front steps and started across the lawn. The ground felt hard beneath my feet. Passing the small crab apple tree I stopped to pick up the fruit which had fallen. It was mostly rotten by now. I flung one or two across the road and continued.

Looking down the street I saw the large trees, some with almost bare limbs, outlined against the hazy, white sky. Soon the smell of burning leaves reached me and replaced the freshness of the autumn air. I looked around at the leaves- scarlet, orange, copper, some green spotted with yellow- and realized that they too would soon be consumed.

When I glanced at my watch I broke into a run. I had promised Old Mr. Stevens I would return his book by two o'clock. Many times this summer I had borrowed books from his rare collection. He would always be sitting on his front porch, in his rocking chair, staring out as if trying to see back into the past. Whenever I came we would have lemonade and cookies while he told me fascinating stories, mostly about the War and Prohibition days. I often wondered how much was truth and how much had gained added color over the years.

While I was reliving the summer I hadn't noticed an approaching car.

"Hey kid, you want to get killed?"

I jumped onto the sidewalk and slowed down to a walk. A little further on I passed a game of touch football. One of the kids ran over to me.

"Hi, do you want to play?"

"No thanks, I'm already late."

"Where to?"

"Old Stevens' place."

"Hey, by the way, did you hear about Sue?"

"No, but--"

"She had a big fight with Jeff last night. 'Gave him back his ring. He'd been going out with Margo anyway. I'm surprised she didn't find out sooner. Everybody else knew about it. Say, what are you doing with that book?"

"I was on my way to Mr. Stevens to return it."

"You mean you actually read that for fun? Looks like five hundred pages to me."

"It's only four-fifty-two. Say, I really have to go."

"Oh well, see you around."

"Bye."

"Hey, say hello to Charlie if you see him."

"Sure."

I resented this intrusion for it had broken my train of thought. I was trying to hold on to summer and I couldn't reconcile myself to the thought that it was over.

Suddenly everything became disagreeable. The smoky air constricted my breathing, my throat ached. The haze seemed deceiving, the sky looked sickly, and the towering trees appeared threatening and scornful.

Again I ran. From across the street a dog barked and followed after me. I slowed down. My first impulse was anger. Why did everyone and everything want to disturb me? I swerved around. Surprised by my sudden movement the dog backed away and I recognized him to be my neighbors' old collie. Feeling sorry for having wished to harm him, I knelt down and ran my fingers through his thick coat. The warmth of his fur made the cold of the street against my knees more acute in comparison.

"That's a good boy, Prince."

After a few minutes I got up and continued on my way. Prince did not follow but looked after awhile and then slunked away.

I was almost at the end of the street. Soon I would turn into Fletcher Street where Mr. Stevens would be waiting on the porch of his white house. I came to the sign post which read Dead End. As I swung around on it, the metal pole felt icy to the touch. I kicked the curb and looked up. Suddenly the smell of smoke intensified. The Stevens' house was covered with black char. In the street several neighbors milled about behind a fire engine.

From the door four men were carrying a blanket-covered body on a stretcher. My heart thumped once and then it seemed to stop beating.

"Crazy old man; went back to get his books."

The flashing red light of the ambulance blinded me. I turned and ran home.

DIANE COGGAN



Glittering among the stained sands...

Glittering among the stained sands of Hector's Troy
lay the curtled-grey bodies of the valiant men-
Coiled into the race was the blood, drawn of filth,
that ran in puddles down the dirty streets-
Astyanax was splattered on the rocks, like a
chicken's carcass lay exposed to the eyes of his mother,
glaring from above.

It had been with her just before, the faint painting of a lost image.
Across the sands she now envisioned seeing him
blood-patched, grossly sweating out the last night's passion.
Virgins, stroked out his body in the glossiness of marble
inside the temple;

Below lay the hope of what was once a passion.
The temple doors were shut, wrath lay on all. Pyrrhus caressed
himself into the brilliance of the morning sunlight
looking for a woman.

Battles lay behind. Before the mere exposure of his conqueror's belt
Troy would be his. Captor, he ignored the flies
surmounting in the fields and the feel of blood below the horse.
He too felt the laden stroke of knives below his shoulder,
the raw stinging of pouring blood. He felt not that he loved,
but that he would love, and saw it only hurrying
across the desert sands in the form of Hector's woman.
He felt the urge it is to be a man walking briskly over red soil,
fallen flies.

Alas, he called to her, maiden that she was, enrobed in virgin cloth,
the sweat about her arms, the soiled white told of
much agony at a deserted love. Begging off to
rocky tombs she fell to see the body of her Hector
lying on the ground.

He and She, had they realized the passion of living,
instead deserted in the confrontation of the dead,
Life would have sprung in each a glorious farewell to
the sodden sands of Troy. And running naked-footed
over carcasses, they both would come to know
the vibrancy of what now held them to the dead. The
dead, splattered body of young Astyanax, the son of Hector's Troy
and a handful of dirt to throw into the sea-

And then, love, like him lay buried beneath the towers of Troy,
forgotten by the slaves on march to Greece.

JULIA ALVAREZ



recent snap in
of such targets as
power plants has
some accusations that
intends to collapse
Vietnam's entire economy.

Embassy sources were
led to have conveyed a
message to the State Department
last month during a period
of intensification of the U.S.
strikes. A similar somber
message was given to some U.S.
men at an embassy press
conference Thursday.

Officials expect to get
word from Moscow's
Ambassador Anatoly
Lobkovsky returns to
Moscow in a few days.

part
talks
have
been

In U.S. view
Russian's opinion
that bilateral is
versely affected.

One example is
consular treaty.
Soviets have not
though the

Three Dead Iguanas

I was suddenly in the square. Without the knowledge of anything more than the annoyance of having a five year old urchin try repeatedly to pick my pocket, I had traveled eight blocks in the dust and heat of noon, and now found myself standing in the heart of the political rally. Surrounded by the monotonous drone which thousands of throats had composed into a frighteningly cacaphonous symphony, it was strange to realize that any so material object, compiled largely of a thousand compressed and sweating bodies, could dispel all sense of physical awareness. Ordinarily I might have stepped back in disgust when a sickly baby burped over my shoulder, but this crowd had indeed overwhelmed me. Perhaps it was hot, perhaps I could smell the bodies of those perspiring people, yet I was never aware of either. For me there was nothing but the crowd. As a component of that crowd, I could scream and cheer, and the words of the speaker could convince me completely, yet how ludicrous I would feel, I thought almost rationally, if I were suddenly to find myself cheering wildly by myself in an empty square. For the moment I was an inseparable part of the woman who giggled beside me, but if I were to pass her tomorrow in the street, we would probably have nothing more than "Good morning" to say to each other.

* * * *

He was, like me, cheering. Little penetrating arrows of heat slithered easily through the labyrinth of his crouching figure, and I noticed the canals of sweat slide freely across his flat face and into the open neck of his sport shirt. The shirt was a new one, and came from Miami, and it was obviously his best, yet he took no notice of the drunk who breathed so heavily on him and slapped a damp hand

across his back with every decisive point the speaker made. He wore rope sandals on his feet and had probably ridden miles to see the candidates. At dusk he would return home on his little cow pony, a machete across his shoulders and a new transistor radio from Japan to his ear. He sucked loudly on a green popsicle and punctuated each slurp with shouts of "Viva!", while a new torrent of sweat dripped slowly down his neck. I watched almost enviously as the green iceberg melted into a little blob of watery green food coloring, and I realized suddenly how thirsty I was.

I turned to the bloated woman, behind me on the curb, who sold drinks of fruit juice in old plastic cups. I knew that the ice, which floated so gallantly in the papaya juice, had been lying on the pavement by the busstop at five this morning, nuzzling an old sow and three half-dead iguanas, but it had lost all importance in the face of this crowd, which, at this hour, twelve twenty-eight, had stopped the rest of the world. I bought one of those drinks from her, and dispelling all forebodings of later journeys to the lavatory, drank it in a hugh swallow, and handed the empty cup back to her. She immediately refilled it and placed it once more on display. She was wearing an old blue dress and rubber thongs, and a baby slept on the ground with the flies by her feet. I saw her there frequently. Every day she could be seen standing on the curb selling drinks to apathetic passerbys, and although the number of babies with her often varied, her costume never did. On rainy days she covered her blue dress with a piece of plastic from the dry cleaner's and her babies slept in the puddles. I wondered how it would be to live a life like hers, standing forever on a curb by the street, watching the same buildings and people day after day in the dull-witted ennui of poverty, the monotony of life shattered only at intervals by the addition of yet another baby to place on the pavement beside her. She smiled at me, and three teeth gaped amiably, and I realized that I would never understand her, just as she would never understand me; and at this moment of the crowd, standing only inches from her glistening figure, I was as close to her as I would ever be, for we shared a mutual ability and desire, to shout with the speaker.

The crowd had begun to move, and slowly building the momentum necessary for an old steam engine, we were soon rushing up a hill toward the glistening oasis of a brilliantly white palace. My feet were still, for I had no intention of running such distances in that stampede of throbbing bodies, but I was with the crowd, a com-

ponent, and I had no choice but to be swept along. I found myself hurled against the man in the rope sandals and together we were washed away with the masses of pushing limbs toward the advancing palace. Unable to retain any sense of direction, I found myself in a kind of human whirlpool, and, prevented from focusing my eyes on anything, I saw only the brown and white blur of the crowd. Slowly the blur converged into an almost distinct khaki formation, but the crowd, unable to stop, continued to scramble toward a line which developed eventually into a row of machine guns. The blur had settled into an almost comfortable kaleidoscope of white and brown and steel gray when I heard the shots so distinctly in the rumble of the crowd and the silence that followed the echo. The noise slapped me and I suddenly became aware of a progressively focusing scene, and I looked down in a moment of disbelief to see a pair of rope sandals settling into the dust, while that deep red blood, oozing so slowly from a brand-new shirt from Miami, sank tauntingly into the soft dirt.

DOROTHY CHENEY

Thoughts

I **Love.** Love is a subject most people write about because each person feels he has experienced it. Man is not incapable of love, but he is incapable of sustaining it. It fades as does the color from a three day clipped flower. Man can not realize love. Often he mistakes it with passion. Otherwise, he can not understand its lack of concreteness. When there is spiritual love, it is never pure love but mingled with fear, awe, and respect. Therefore, man has the capability of loving. In his analysis of its existence, he loses it and catches a fair glimpse of it as it deserts him. Love then is not a subject to be tampered with.

II **Knowledge.** Man thinks he knows much but he knows nothing. Knowledge to him is really the result of knowledge. The praise and awe of his listeners, his own superciliousness and pride, the volubility of his tongue. But, in truth, Montaigne does not know where the world ends and the sky begins, or whether there is a world or whether there is a sky.

III **Fear.** Fear is real. It is something of the mind but that does not argue its existence. Man fears because he has glimpsed something he is incapable of comprehending, and man is both in fascination and in dread of the unknowable. Man's answer for fear is an Almighty Power who protects and defends him, but commands respect by use of fear itself.

IV Children. Children are unspoiled beings, i.e. undeveloped adults. They are shy only when in the presence of elders who constantly remind them of their non-existent inferiority. Children are uninhibited and frank. Reason spoils them, thought only brings complexities and environment imposes on them superficialities. Children should be taken from their parents at an early age to avoid contamination and be placed in the custody of undeveloped, but supposedly developed adults.

V Maturity. Maturity is a scape-goat word for hypocrisy. Men are never "mature." Maturity to them is a memorization of certain mannerisms or expressions apt for a certain situation. Maturity is achieved after years of having studied tactfulness and genteelness. But if a mature individual were placed in a situation for which he has not studied, he will act worse than a child.

IV Minds. Minds are classified into two categories. There are those whose intellect works in an organized and precise way. They look for reasons, they analyze, they desire concrete information. They are also intelligent and require little or no guidance. Secondly, there are the lost minds. The minds that are always somewhere else, imagining, going off on tangents and sometimes into abnormality. It is difficult for these minds to concentrate and sometimes a simple statement takes time to penetrate. These minds are dangerous, radical. They start revolutions, they murder, they discover places, they rarely have friends, they are difficult to live with. Generally, in this world, the first type of mind prevails with variations sometimes nearing the second kind. The other type is rare and should be considered dangerous. It should also be respected and admired like a precious amber stone with a fossil inside.

JULIA ALVAREZ







The Race

faster, faster
look out behind
behind
here he comes
can't can't let him
up and down, up and down
must push harder
harder; more more
don't look don't look behind
behind
here he comes
still try try harder
round and round
whirrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr
oh my God my God my God
he's coming again
DON'T LOOK
turn, here's the turn QUICK
losing control God help me!
God wait God is never there
don't help, God you can't
only me
watch out! he's coming
too fast
work, work, work
more into it
everything's a blur blurrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr
damn goggles
never work anyway
oh my eyes, my eyes
can't see him
but he's coming faster now

move legs move
 don't stop can't stop
 stop, stop someone let me stop
 no can't
 God can't no one can
 still on; on, on, on, on, on, on
 he's almost on me now
 not quite still hope
 is there no end?
 end there's an end
 somewhere
 i see it
 far, far away
 but don't stop, he's coming
 it's nearer
 closer closer closer
 they're on me now!
 my goggles!
 they're gone can't see at all
 still faster, faster, faster, faster . . .
 blindly, blindly, blindly
 nothing now just a blurrrrrrrrrrrr

DIANE BEST



On Powers

$$\sim \int x^k dx = \frac{1}{k+1} x^{k+1} + C ; \int x dx = \frac{1}{2} x^2 + C ; \int x^2 dx = \frac{1}{3} x^3 + C \sim$$

His name is Ecks. According to the 1947 World Census figures, he is one in 2.3 billion, and according to his friends he is a highly individualistic [inimitable] sort of man who can only be described by reproducing his reactions to problems that he might be faced with on an average day. Of course "an average day" is only a manner of speaking: there obviously is no such thing. Therefore his friends and I have chosen at random one day of his life which we shall attempt to reconstruct, admittedly putting great emphasis on his reactions. The day is April 1, 1956.

Ecks woke up that morning and gave but a quick glance to the calendar. According to modern calculations someone had risen 1,929 years earlier, and as a confirmed believer in the superb organization of the universe, Ecks expected that someone else be resurrected on some appropriate day in the not too distant future. As he shaved with his straight razor, he came to the conclusion that as he liked his eggs fried over-hard, he really should devise a more logical way of flipping them. The conventional method consisted either of flipping them like pancakes, which managed only to spatter grease all over the kitchen, or of turning the eggs over gently with a spatula which required too much time and therefore too much effort. But actually it required more effort to find and then to carry out a more efficient method than to continue with the old method, the spatula method, for example. To solve his problem he therefore boiled an egg that morning. Since it was Sunday, he decided after breakfast that he wanted to roam around the suburbs in his new bright red VW and watch the snow melt.

So he was being square: what could be more bourgeois and "typical American" than a Sunday driver in a shiny VW3. Actually it was only half-bad to be square. And he was only half square since he was not just a Sunday driver: he would have decided to tour the suburbs because it was Monday; had it been Monday, on Tuesday because it was Tuesday and so forth. Actually he toured the suburbs because he was an insurance salesman who disliked immobility. So half of Ecks squared his shoulders, his physical half since he had an incorrigible hunched-mind, and he proceeded to spectate. But the squared half of Ecks had a strange property: if a little something could be added to neutralize his physical individuality, he would prove to be the standardized, typified male. His reflexes, his emotional reactions, even his intellectual reactions to problems would be typical: this, because physical conformity seemed to force on him emotional and intellectual conformity. As he drove through the conforming commuters' city, he remained a basic individualist, however.

He remained so until in a sudden blinding flash of intense white light, the necessary neutralizing constant was added. This one half of the squared Ecks, plus the constant, immediately earned the appearance of that indistinguishable man-in-the-crowd, while his red Volkswagen turned beige. It seemed that the spark had chased away his individuality as though he had rapidly rolled under a bed, chasing all the swirling dust-kittens out the other side. The new Ecks passed a stationary patrol-car and felt his jaw-muscles clench into a flabby middle-aged knot. For the first time in his existence he experienced a desire to try a gas-station contest, and he easily succumbed to his desire. He also found himself inspecting parked cars, checking out their accessories and potential price tags as opposed to inspecting other people's expressions, gaits and intangible, personal worth. He was constantly reacting satisfactorily: there is a certain pleasure in breaking an individual without their knowing it by adding only to one part of them-and then letting their character destroy the rest of their individuality precisely because of their highly individualistic, and therefore highly predictable reactions to certain changes.

In his shiny new beige Volkswagen the new Ecks was surrounded by a numbing haze of conforming indifference. He was obediently beginning to react only to the most basic sensory stimulation: he wished only to satisfy the demands of both ends of his alimentary canal, and of any soporific symptoms. Now down to the lowest

common human denominator possible, he was ready for the last stage.

Gradually the new Ecks and his beige Volkswagen began to melt as would an ice-block on a hot stove. As their shapes became wholly indistinguishable, the water from the ice-block began to boil and to turn to steam- but a heavy, massy, practically oily steam. Indeed, there had been no flash of white light this time, just a general decomposition of the body until only an amoebic blob of uncertain consistency and size remained. A new dimension, a new power was being added, and only the sixth sense of the product was accepted. However, an immeasurable residue of the physical self had to be taken into account, and this was done by recognizing the existence of the constantly-present blob. The most important single thing about this blob was certainly not its physical appearance, however: most important was the strange power emitted by one specific side of the radially symmetrical mass, from the right hand to be exact. This was certainly due to the fact that the newly created being had both gained a new power and lost all but its sixth sense. It was indeed nothing more than one sixth of the old squared Ecks once one power had been added, plus one constant. This Sixth Sense, transformed from the status of a specific individual to the present status, via the status of Everyman, had kept one thing throughout its various stages. It had kept the original value Ecks in its entirety which could be multiplied by itself and then divided by some value to change the value of the whole concept without altering the original Ecks. The finished product, the Sixth Sense, was the result of much weaving of new values into the old fibers of Ecks, the integration of all new values into the old fibers of Ecks, the integration of all new values and the old value, while still leaving the old value intact. This gave a strange potency to the Sixth Sense: because Ecks was an integral part of it, as it was an integral part of both the Individual and the Everyman, it could better understand them both, just as a reformed juvenile delinquent can better understand both the frustrated child that shall evolve into a hoodlum and the hoodlum himself, than can a man who has been a model citizen throughout his life. Inherently in the reformed delinquent is that part of him which allowed him to evolve as he did which means that he can understand other hoodlums and potential hoodlums because he is inherently similar to them. As he is similar to them and can understand them, he can outwit them and thereby have a very real hold on them. This is the power given to the Sixth Sense by the Ecks.

The Sixth Sense lost one power and then was multiplied by three as the first of April flowed into the second of April. At the same time, the standardized half of Ecks squared lost one dimension and was doubled. All this was done with all due respect to the basic integrity of the character of Ecks which meant that the instant that the first of April was metamorphosed into the second of the same month, Ecks existed once more.

The unchangeable Ecks had temporarily been blinded by the white flash which had changed him from the Individual to the Everyman, and his suffering had been made obvious in physical terms by his change in appearance as well as by the fact that he had not made clear gain of one power through the change: he had in fact lost one half of his new self. The same was true in even more drastic terms in the second change: he had suffered physically in that his tangible self had been melted and even partially dissolved, and his new self was only a third of what would have been had he made a net profit of one power on his change from Everyman to Sixth Sense. The return, however, had been childishly simple. In the length of time equivalent to the fraction of a second a human is unconscious as he sneezes, the Sixth Sense had been disintegrated first into the Everyman and then into the Individual, or the original Ecks.

As Ecks turned toward home in his luminescent red Volkeswagen at 12:01 a.m. of April 2, 1956, he felt as though he had lost a small intangible part of himself, a memory for example, and he unconsciously regretted whatever he had lost. The well-trained car automatically led Ecks into his driveway. As he got out of the car he was surprised to see that one small part of his red VW had been seared by fire.

MORAL:

Suffering is greater
As power is gaining
Than when sometime later
That power is waning.

CLAIRE MOORE

Study in Staccato/(Motionless)

White walls
Sullied
By the dirt
Breathed
From polluted lungs
And machinated minds;

(You laugh,
Slipping through the grey abyss
Of acceptance;)

Lights splatter
Whiter
Purer
White
On whitest
Purest
White;
(You pause,
Unsure-)
To laugh or cry,
To wonder,
To want to know,
Accept the unreasonable answer,
The unthinking yes ?

MARGARET WILDE



“Something New”

It seems that new experiences are always the most frightening. Walking through the slums of New York for the first time at age thirteen certainly was. There were two of us to fend off a foreboding world of uncovered garbage cans, sleeping drunks, and dark, narrow streets. It was a change from the sunshine world of suburbia.

Sharon was sure that the address was somewhere around there.

These surroundings did look familiar. How Sandy's brother, Brad, ever picked this neighborhood was beyond me. Our appointed destination turned out to be a four-story pile of bricks. We walked through the doorway (there was no door) and literally climbed four flights of the narrowest stairs I had ever seen in my life. They were a foot wide and covered with piles of white painting canvass. Along the edges of the canvasses, were balanced a motley assortment of paint cans. Plaster would fall from the ceiling when you stepped hard on the stairs. Someone was changing the color scheme from undiluted sky blue to passion red. This would certainly change the atmosphere, since there wasn't a window anywhere on the way up.

We knocked and could hear murmurings, feet shuffling, and then a voice demanded to know who it was. Our identity revealed, the door opened, emitting a thick cloud of smoke. For a moment my eyes were too watery to focus on the scene, but when they did I was greeted by a pair of heavy lidded, dark circled eyes and several pairs of bare feet. Somehow my mother had forgotten to warn me about people like this. Don't talk to strangers and don't go to unknown places alone was still fresh in my mind. Since I had lived in friendly little towns all of my life and couldn't leave the street at night I never got the chance to follow this wise (?) advise.

The apartment consisted of two rooms and a toilet hidden in the closet. The kitchen was four by eight with a beat up gas stove from the depression, a 1918 refrigerator (we later found out that it didn't work because they didn't have any electricity), a chipped white sink, and a gray metal table. The other room was their bed-

room, livingroom, diningroom, and parlor, where they entertained their guests. There was a general lack of furniture except for two mattresses and one chair. At the end of the room was one curtainless window with a magnificent view of the back alley.

We joined the circle in the parlor and were offered the choice of a joint or a glass. Sharon smoked and I drank because I had never even smoked a cigarette. After one glass I devised a system of swallowing so that I could hardly taste a thing. When my body relaxed into a lump of numbness I started examining the characters surrounding me. Besides the two of us, there were four boys and two girls. Both girls were Woolworth blondes with dark roots and were dresser in cut off "clinging" jeans. The fattest part of the taller one was her two inch thick mascara. Her legs were so thin I could have sworn the light from the window showed through them. The other had an over abundance of flesh, protruding from every angle. Brad was in the kitchen washing his hair with Crest. By the window, taking in the view, was Arnie. Arnie was short and looked like a red haired mouse with wire rimmed glasses. Gumper sat in the corner examining the green mold on his feet (they didn't have a bathtub.) The thin blonde and John were in the other corner, wrestling over an open switchblade.

Even as I slipped into a world of double vision, the scene didn't change. The pattern varied slightly from time to time as someone dodged the flying switch blade, but being too involved in watching my toes multiply and change shapes, I wasn't disturbed by the lack of activity. There was little to no conversation except an argument over rent payments. Sharon and I left at the height of this altercation. Fortunately, we found Grand Central and made it home in time for dinner with the family. My mother was very interested to hear about good old F.A.O. Schwarz, etc. At ten o'clock she tucked us into bed and turned out the light.

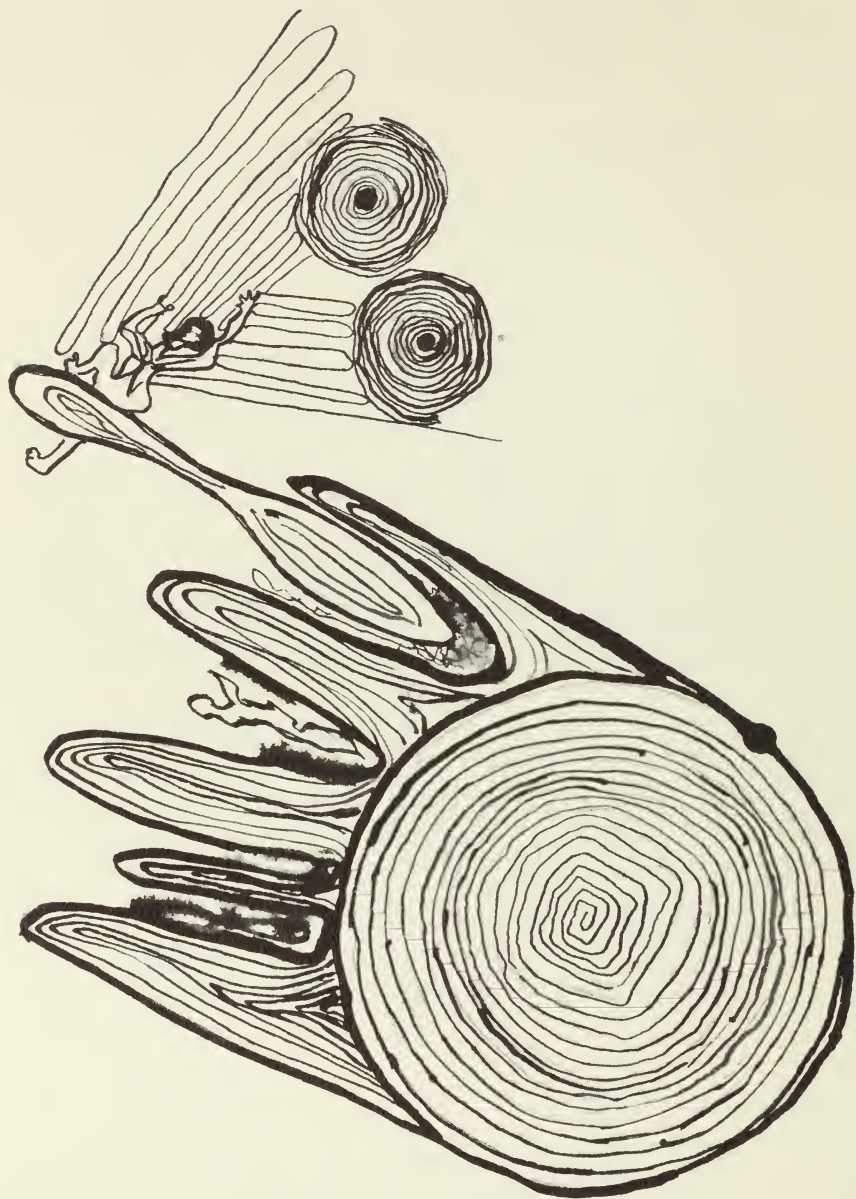
KATHY SACKETT

Gold splotches...

Gold splotches mingled in the twining black,
green lace backgrounded by a blue sky
a dying lullaby to a forgotten night —
Three children on a white dune
three figures on an empty earth
digging for crabs on a friday afternoon —
The seagulls screaming fish dancing
on gilded waves and
eternity watching from a dark corner.

Soon there would be no gold splotches . . .
the lace would be white . . . the blue
sky — gray and tears frozen
with hate would fall from a gray sky.
Squeals of music would fall from a dirty organ grinder
Whiteness everywhere Blackness too
The sand dunes would be melted into craters
where bodies, dragged by the frozen waves, had fallen . . .
and eternity would advance from its dark corner

JULIA ALVAREZ



Dawn

A man loosened the scarf around his neck. The night's quiet coldness eased his heart, and the air was so still, so very still; he was walking alone through the corkscrew-curving levels of a parking structure. He imagined what the top level would be like: the glassy surface of iced-over snow, the stillness of it. He walked on.

The muffled sound of his footsteps on the cool concrete did not break the tranquility of the deserted carport, but rather became part of that stillness that lives in darkness. Stillness is too often chased off by earthly terrors; her soft, quiet eyes are offended by the hot, glaring light, the hot, blaring noise of day.

A man was finding an unusual sense of peace in the still coldness of the concrete building. Dawn was a few hours away; he was safe until then, safe from everything, safe from a world that made no place for stillness. He took his time, he tasted each step as if it were to be his last on earth. The levels stretched on, rising above the deserted streets; every turn lifted the man further from the squalor of the city. And then, suddenly, he had reached the top. One million still stars in a still sky, one million still snowflakes glistened.

It started with a gaseous, yellowy-purple haze seeping in warmly from the east, and the indifferent hiccup of an automobile engine turning over in a remote corner of town. Slowly the haze began to spread, slowly the car turned toward the center of the city where a man knelt, defenseless, on the roof of a carport. Insidious, inexorable, a burning, reddish film gradually permeated the spreading haze, a car gathered speed, and a man shut his eyes in pain. He could feel the light filtering through the eastern haze, he could hear the distant rumble of a car's engine; they seemed to enlarge, to grow closer, to surround him.

The sun peered over the world's edge, spreading its lethal tentacles across the horizon, bubbling hotly as it grew; the car made its way efficiently through the city toward a carport, its blinding headlights piercing the grayness. It drove into a deserted street which led to the entrance of the parking structure and, going in, it began the long, sinuous climb to the top.

A man followed its progress with all of his senses. He looked wildly down at his clasped hands, as if it were their fault that his desperate prayer had never been answered. The car approached. Although it was December, sweat covered the man's entire body. He ran to the edge of the roof and looked down at the cold pavement far below, so still, so very still.

The man was shaken by convulsive trembling; at any moment the car would appear around that corner. Its heat was closer every second, it was nearly there! Desperate, he turned his face to the heavens, seeking, imploring. And all at once he saw it.

It sprawled across the eastern sky, its tentacles outstretched, grasping. A boiling cloud of noxious fumes emanated from its hot, bleeding center. The man recoiled violently from its fiery poison with a gasp of horror and disgust, but before he had time to take a breath there came a heart-searing roar and the hot stench of exhaust as the black machine lunged out from around the turn, the scalding glare of its headlights melting into the pulsating fire of the sun.

KITTREDGE CARY

Upon entering...

Upon entering
a discussion
on the existence
of a God.

CHER LEWIS

The Rise of Mutki

I remember the day we carved the dead man out of snow-
we made his head too small - it had to be removed,
removed, replaced - it dented on the temples
and so I patched a frozen lump of snow to ease the pain.
“Mutki . . . Mutki.” The frozen one. Ceaselessly the
burst of warmth made fall the line of coffin-
and I saw rise within its sphere of domination and
bid the last traces of the rain to wash away his bed.
‘That is what truly happened —
but they saw only that the rain ran in scattered patches
down to the growth of spring.

JULIA ALVAREZ

Prime Cuts

I have discovered, over the years, that the most amusing game to play is "making fun of other people". To start this intellectual stimulant, at least two people are necessary, but a group makes it more enjoyable. This is a practical diversion since location is of no consequence and it may be played at any hour. The object of this sport is to create the most interesting characture possible by imitating another person's mannerisms. There are no cards, game boards, dice, or other such equipment involved. Each person should just have a lively imagination and a good sense of humor. The person who makes the prime cuts and obtains the best reaction with the most humorous and delightful charade is the winner.

A more sophisticated style of this divertissement is one where the actors perform in front of the person they are mocking. This deviation is more complicated than the former game. It has all the same rules, but the impersonator aims not only to amuse his audience, but also to inflict pain upon the person being exploited. The first actor to make the imitated one cry or leave the room is declared the champion.

Though I have played this game quite frequently for many years, it has never become boring. In my opinion, it is one of the healthiest and most wholesome pastimes ever invented or improvised.

ANNE ROBINSON



And we were given...

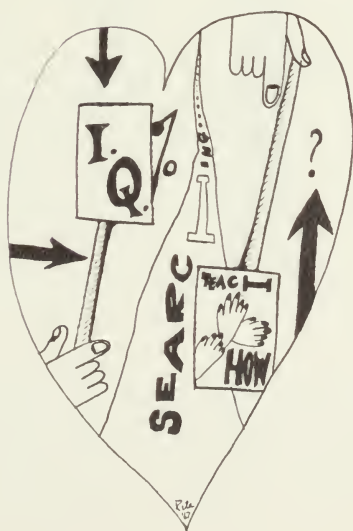
And we were given
life,
And tools to use it,
hands and minds
and hearts . . .

And there was school
to teach us to use our hands . . .
and our minds . . .

Yet there was no teacher
of love . . .
But love itself.

So, very few learned to love,
because it was so hard to find . . .
Preoccupied, as we were,
with our hands . . .
and our minds . . .

JESSI WITHERSPOON





From the stark, upward inclination...

From the stark, upward inclination of the road, it lay on the right. Around it was an old coconut gate, brown branches held together by green slits of palms. The road was rock and red soil, again another little hill and up. From there you could look down into another valley and up another hill and again this sloping motion until you came to the river. The natives never could tell whether it was a lake or a river, it had a strong undercurrent, so they called it a river. In reality it was a lake. The marsh grass lay thick on a watery slush of gray mud, stenching heavy with dead flies. Here and there was a scatter of palm and guava trees, and rarely one alone giving on the hill its profile. From each little hill you could see the river slowly coming into sight. It was wide across, even the grown men could not throw a stone and reach the other side. The children, naked with dirt, hung around for hours, trying patiently to do what their fathers could never do. The mothers sometimes watched them, hour on hour, throwing the stones, leaving the ground bare and empty with holes. All this from the palm gate to the river was land, real land- not the vague, forgotten lots of suburbia but God damn, real, good land.

Although it was private land, the filth and trash of the povertied mass built shacks along the sides of the little hills. At first, it was only one or two families and so the owner ignored them; now they laid slacked one across the other, the mounds of shacks, the mounds of exposed cocoons bursting forth over the little hills. There were some hills, unoccupied, looking silently on the river. The natives lived off the palm fruits and the plantain trees; they dreaded the winter storms that washed away the trees into the river, leaving them in hunger.

At night, the glints of the gas lamps sent off their smell; away, far away, beyond which some had never gone, came the faint breeze of kerosene. Hills they were, of pierced fireflies; the poor had built a town in someone's land and they called it Los Cocos because of the abundance of palm trees.

Along the second set of hills, three rows away from the river, one row away from the road, there was a little indentation of the hill before you reached the summit; built into it was the mercado. There you could buy two plantains for two cents and ten coconuts for five cents. There was also sugar and coffee beans and once in a while, in a time of prosperity, a few pieces of hogs' meat hung with flies from a rusted nail. Beside the mercado was bright raw pink colored hut with a palm branch roof and gate. The people of Los Cocos always liked to have gates around their houses, as if afraid that what was not theirs might be taken away. This house had been painted recently, and buried into the wall paint were the brush's hairs: some hairs protruded out and sometimes a child would come and pull some out. The paint was uneven, bright on the left, and faded on the right where the night breezes and the early morning winds hit it.

When in the light of early morning, the women, grinding the coffee beans, shouted from hill to hill, the shack came into view. There was always by it Dinora. It was the custom, like the eldest always tends the younger children, and every morning in the leaving coolness, there was Dinora's profile on the pink walls. Then from the inside Adalgisia always called: "Well, have you not the coffee ready?" Short and curt, floating on the warmth of the little valleys, and never an answer, only the wetness of the drying plantain trees hissing back. Adalgisia came out and looked always out into the river bed where the men were washing. They never looked at each other, there was nothing to see except the vague reflection of themselves cast back. Both had flaming red hair; there is something about a woman with hair the color of marsh mud that reeks through the minds of men. Those two beautiful heads of red out on the hillside, one grinding the coffee, one looking on, as if the sun had photographed the first at work and copied her in thought.

"Of colors, of colors are painted the hillsides in the spring. Of colors, of colors are the little birds that come on the outside, of colors, of-"

"Is that all you can sing, like a dumb beggar; if you must do something come grind coffee beans- you always complain they always take so long to be grinded. In the mornings before you wake, I go next door and then I sit here and watch the sun rise grinding like dead cassava strands. I tire too."

"Why must you make it a point of speaking to me? I have told you I loathe you. Leave me to sing and let us only speak of necessary things; you know I do not enjoy singing except at certain times. You always must ruin something."

"Lord guard you, you loose flirt, hating a sister is just in your nature. I love you as a sister; I hate you as a person. The coffee beans will almost be gone; most spurt out as I pound."

"Good morning, Ignasio; wait before you leave. Come, let me give you something of a remembrance to keep you for the day."

Out under her feet, climbing slowly a cattle herder, a brown haired cattle man, matches the splotches of the cows below him.

"So, how fares my rubia this morning. Wake me with a worthwhile one after climbing up so far to get it. Why must your house be out of the way to my work. Now don't eat me, all up in one chunk. Your sister is watching us, I better leave- but you are such a distraction."

"Adios, my loved one, remember me as you chase those cattle. Goodbye."

"Why must you always stare at us, have you no respect for love?"

"For love, yes, but not for foolish passion. You stench the very air. Exact replica of our father- bless his damned soul."

"When I look at how beautiful the hills are in the morning, I sometimes wonder why beauty must always be only for those who want to take of it. You only want to give to it and therefore you sit there, bitterly grinding your coffee beans:

Sycamore, sycamore, sycamore leaves
falling gently to soft love places
"To live is to undo your belt" and
look for joy, hiding deftly, in forgotten places."

"Stop speaking as an idiot. You have told me to be silent- Good morning, Padre Vinchi, yes, thank you.- you have told me to be silent. Why do you not swallow some of what you say? You think I have no joy, well surely I do not search it where you do, but

I have joy. I have joy when I sit and say a rosary to our mother, when I wash the cloths with the women and sing hymns of more joy. I have joy itself as I sit here in the morning and grind my coffee beans. Joy is not the arms of a man, the feel of his belly or his strong thighs. I love the joy of giving but not my body but a feeling. You know that. I always enjoyed doing even small things for you, but you can take from all but me. I am growing bitter; bitterness at twenty three is like gray hairs at thirteen."

"Dinora, grind your coffee beans and soak in the joy. See that man, no not that one, yes, the one by the tan sow. IGNASIO! He can not hear me. Sometimes in the river bed, I lie there beside him and I whisper in his ear- Ignacio?- even then the handsome fool does not hear me, I run my fingers down his brow and nose, only then-"

"Stop it! Foolish things. Although you look a woman, you act a youngster with her first man. Have you ever loved a man only because he is good or must you always seek out the wild ones. You have been lucky that God has not punished you with a child. Padre Vinchi says that our mother in heaven is weeping as she watches you."

"Well, why should she? Where do you think she sought our father; she hardly knew him one night. Then she dared to call me a wench when at thirteen she caught me caressing Rubendario whose father had just died. And I do not care what the Padre says, wine drinker, nun pincher. And you make my love for Ignacio sound like dirt. We adore each other; adoration has no place in a marriage, for that reason we do not marry in a church. But in our minds we married when we first loved each other."

"But do you not want the children, the blessing of love? That will be my sacrifice to my husband. To suffer and yet enjoy the burden of a living part of both ourselves. Padre says many women weep and mourn their marriage night, but I will go with such great love and out of our two lips shall part the flame of- I too am talking foolishness! Hand me that sack, the coffee beans are done."

Out over the valley, lifting itself slowly out of the sleepiness and drunkenness of the river, cracks out the morning like a young egg, leaving its yoke upon Ignacio, screaming love words at the cows.

Julia Alvarez

Try and convince someone...



Try and convince someone

The sky is blue.

When everyone else says

The sky is red.

And no one knows for sure,
because not even you have
ever looked up. Anyway,

The sky is overcast.

So now you say,

The sky is red.

CHER LEWIS





